New Nouveau Brunswick CANADA

News Release

Communications New Brunswick

N.B. Human Rights Commission

Human Rights Day statement (01/12/10)

NB 1229

Dec. 10, 2001

FREDERICTON (CNB) - The following op-ed article is issued by New Brunswick Human Rights Commission Chairman Patrick Malcolmson on Human Rights Day, Monday, Dec. 10.

Human Rights Day - A Day to Reflect on Human Rights

"*Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world...*"

These are the opening words of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the world community on Dec. 10, 1948. Human Rights Day is a time to celebrate human rights, and also to reflect on how they now provide the moral and political foundation of human life.

Consider the extent to which the phrase "human rights" is commonly used in everyday speech, and the extent that human rights are woven into the fabric of daily life in Canada today. We are all aware of the injustice of discrimination and the fundamental principle in justice that demands equals be treated equally.

If human rights, particularly international human rights, long seemed a distant concern to most Canadians, this is surely no longer the case. Today, on Human Rights Day, we would all do well to pause and consider how much has changed, and how evident are these changes. The much talked about phenomenon of "globalization" has been brought home to all of us. It is now obvious that globalization is not a mere intellectual fad. We are, in fact, connected to events around the world.

In the opening passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there is the somewhat ominous observation: "Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind..."

Terrorism and war are no longer concerns of any one country. They are things that now directly concern all members of the global community. The after-effects of recent events have had profound human rights implications in Canada. The backlash against innocent members of our society because of their ethnic origin or religion, and the rush to legislate restrictions on civil liberties in the face of perceived dangers to our society are only two of the more obvious. Even more importantly, the ongoing changes in human society on a global scale continue to outpace our ability to understand the changes, let alone prudently begin to deal with the problems they have created. Consider, for example, the enormous ethical issues raised by cloning and genetic testing, or the risks posed to privacy by computer technology.

We shall either deal with these and similar issues in an ethical and just manner, or we will not. Moreover, none of these issues can be dealt with simply at a provincial or national level. They will become international issues because they involve phenomena that transcend the geographic boundaries of nation-states.

The doctrine of universal human rights is centuries old. It provides us with the means to discuss justice, fairness, dignity, equality and other fundamental human concerns in an ethical manner. And, it provides us with the means to discuss them in a way that is universally applicable to all of humanity.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

On this day - Human Rights Day -- I invite you to take time to reflect on the rights and the responsibilities we all have as human beings, and to consider this fundamental principle of human rights.

01/12/10

MEDIA CONTACT: Francis Young, 506-453-2301; Web site: http://www.gnb.ca/hrc-cdp/e/index.htm.

01/12/10

Communications New Brunswick
E-mail | Contacts | Disclaimer | Privacy Statement